DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 295 599 IR 013 251

AUTHOR Flournoy, Don M.
TITLE Telecommunications and National Goals in Indonesia.
PUB DATE 4 Aug 84
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented to the Southeast Asian Studies Conference (Ann Arbor, MI, August 4, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communications Satellites; *Developing Nations; *Distance Education; Educational Objectives; Foreign Countries; *Mass Media; Rural Development; *Telecommunications
IDENTIFIERS *Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This discussion of the cultural aspects of mass media in Indonesia covers the following topics: (1) PALAPA, the Indonesian communications satellite; (2) cultural, demographic, and economic characteristics of Indonesia; (3) television policies and programming; (4) the number of government- and privately-owned radio stations; (5) a longitudinal study being conducted to explore the social impact of television; and (6) development objectives, with emphasis on the role of telecommunications in education. A number of distance education projects at all levels are briefly described. (24 references). (MES)

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND NATIONAL GOALS IN INDONESIA

A Presentation to
The Southeast Asian Studies Conference
University of Michigan
August 4, 1984

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Telecommunications operate within cultures. Cultural expectations of mass media in the Republic of Indonesia, at least from the point of view of the national leadership, are quite different from expectations of mass media in most Western countries. In Indonesia, the telecommunications system is perceived to be a national resource and is expected to be used as an instrument of nation building.

In January of this year, in his opening remarks to the Ministers of Information of non-aligned countries meeting in Jakarta, President Suharto touched on this issue. "In the context of assuring a successful completion of national development," President Suharto told the Ministers, mass media use was being intensified. Indonesia looked to the mass media to "inflame the spirit of dedication and the struggle of the nation, consolidate the national unity and cohesion, enhance the sense of national responsibility and discipline, popularize the national culture and identity, and stimulate the participation of the community in development".

President Suharto was only stating what was already well-understood among Indonesians. That is, the mass media, especially telecommunications, are there to promote national unity and integration and to facilitate national development.

PERUMTEL, the Indonesian telecommunications operations (Perusahaan Umum Telekomunikasi), is the responsibility of the Director General of Posts and Telecommunication under the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Tourism. This office has become a key office in the Suharto Government in helping to implement national goals, as the following will illustrate.

In 1976, Indonesia launched its own communications satellite. The PALAPA A-1 satellite was the first in any developing country. At that time, only the United States, Canada, and . . . had their own satellites. PALAPA A-2 was placed in orbit in 1977, followed by B-1 in 1983 and by the (unsuccessful) B-2 in 1984.

The PALAPA satellite is the technological expression of an old and deeply held concept, Wawasan Nusantara, which aims at realizing the islands of Indonesia as a single political, social-cultural and economic entity. The name PALAPA itself was derived from the Amukti Palapa oath sworn by Prime Minister Gadja Mada of the Kingdom of Majapahit in 1334. According to the story, Prime Minister Gadja Mada swore he would not taste of the delicious Palapa fruit until the entire Indonesia archipelago was united into a single territory. This unity was achieved with the integration of the archipelago under the Gulakelapa (red and white) flag in 1351.

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The PALAPA satellite today provides television, telephone and data transmission services throughout the 13,000 islands of Indonesia, a region embracing over 750,000 square miles.

According to AID spokesmen, "Outside of North America, the Indonesian Palapa system is the only existing operational system with the satellite power to provide service particularly suitable for new applications in health, education, agriculture, information, or special interest networks." With its excess capacity, PALAPA leases transponder space to other ASEAN member countries, most notably Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.

Through Jakarta center, eight regional production stations, and 140 relay stations, approximately 90 of Indonesia's 150 million people are now within reach of the Government-operated television service.

Some basic characteristics about the country of Indonesia should be noted. Since national independence in 1945, a single national language (bahasa Indonesia) has been successfully adopted, even though there were (and are) some 60 ethnic groups with 250 languages and dialects. Religious freedoms are protected by the Constitution: 88% of the people follow the Islamic religion, while 5% are Christian, 3% Hindu, 2% Confucian and Buddhist, 2% other. Eighty percent of the population reside in rural areas. Per capita wealth is estimated by the World Bank at $520.

Economic growth over the last ten years has been about 7%. Indonesia is the World's largest producer of rubber; it is the World's eleventh-ranked producer of oil, which represents about 70% of its export, and the third largest producer of rice. More or less self-sufficient in food production, Indonesia employs about 60% of its working population in agriculture, whereas industry employs only 7%.

Television is a Government owned and operated national service. By conscious policy, only about 20% of television programs are imported. There is only one channel. Eighty percent of all programs produced in Indonesia are produced in the Jakarta center; the remainder are produced by eight regional stations. News and information represents 28% of all programming; education and religion represents 23%, arts and entertainment 47%, other 2%. The service broadcasts 8-9 hours daily. There are about 2.5 million registered (privately owned) TV sets; license fees are approximately RP 750 (US$.90) for black and white and RP 1500 (US$1.80) per month. Prior to 1981 license fees paid for 60% of costs, advertising 39%, and the Government contributed 1%. In 1981 commercial advertising was removed from the TV service (new percentages of support are not available).

Radio Republik Indonesia has 48 broadcast stations, each linked to one of three regional networks located in Medan (Sumatra), Yogyakarta (Java) and Unjunpandang (Suluwesi). In addition to the Government-owned system, 169 privately-owned radio stations are registered, including stations owned by universities and religious and missionary organizations. The nunber of radio receivers in Indonesia was estimated to be six million in 1982.

Development programs at the community level has been a dominant initiative of the Suharto government. His New Order leadership, from 1965 until the present, has been oriented toward encouraging active particpation of all the people in development. Thus, it is not surprising that the communciations media in Indonesia are used to reach people, to explain to them the objectives of the Government's programs, to enlist their support and to insure their active participation.

When Indonesia launched the PALAPA satellite in 1976 it commissioned a longitudinal study to assess the social impact of TV on rural Indonesia. This took the form of a cooperative research project of the Indonesian National Institute of Economic and Social Research (LEKNAS/LIPI) and the Hawaii-based East-West Communication Institute with funding from the Indonesian Ministry of Information.

While the complete results of the study are not yet available, initial research suggested that a reasonably rapid change is occuring in the rural areas. Villagers are adopting modern health practices, knowledge of family planning methods is more widespread, family financial resources are being used rationally, agricultural innovations are being tried, ethnic relations are improving, use of bahasa Indonesia is widespread and desire for futher education is high. Whether the availablity of TV programs in the villages is the prime cause or even a prime contributor to these largely-favorable changes is unknown.

One of Indonesia's prime development objectives is in the area of education. Indonesia's fiscal year budget for 1984-85 is over RP 20 trillion. For the first time, the development budget for education is RP 1.5 trillion, higher than any other sector, including agriculture, mining and industry, health, community development and the armed forces. (Communications received RP 1.4 trillion but that figure includes roads and bridges, rail, sea and air transport, the postal service, the telephone system as well as radio and television.)

With only a minimal school system left by the Dutch in 1945, Indonesia has managed to increase its literacy rate to 72% in 1980. In fact, literacy for the urban population was judged to be 89% in 1982 and 68% in the rural areas. Improvements in teacher training, materials development and school building, as a result of a commitment to universal elementary education, have made it possible for 20 million children to be enrolled in primary schools. This represents about 96% of all children reaching school age.

The number of secondary school places is still severely limited. Even though the Government has given a high priority in the Fourth Five-year Development Plan (REPELITA IV), to school expansion, curriculum development, textbook preparation and dissemination and teacher training at the secondary level, the effort still falls far short of the admitted need. The quality of education provided is also far less than the Government would like.

Gaining access to higher education is an even more serious problem. The forty state universities, with 267 faculties, in 1980 could accommodate less than 200,000 students. Private universities more than doubled the number but productivity remains low. Even with the expansion of regional universities such as Hasanuddin University in Unjunpandang and the University of North Sumatra at Medan and the development of new polytechnic and diploma-type training programs, with assistance from international funding agencies, higher education is still a very scarce commodity in Indonesia.

Educational telecommunications, which the country is implementing in a big way, has at least two goals of its own: to increase access to educational opportunity and to make improvements in the quality of education.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education, largely through its Center For Communication Technology in Education and Culture (PTKPK), has since 1978 been developing and testing technology-based alternative solutions to educational problems and training personnel. Much of this effort is for the purpose of reaching students whose access to education is limited by factors of geography, shortages of classroom space and trained teachers. The technologies include use of television via satellite and microwave, radio, telephone, film, video disc and slide/cassette programs.

The new Indonesian Open University is one of the more ambitious examples of such efforts. Basically a television-based correspondence study program, the Open University is expected to accommodate some 25,000 students in its first year. By the end of REPELITA IV, according to Nugroho Notosusanto, Minister of Education and Culture, the Open University will have the capacity to accommodate 350,000 students.

The "Universitas Terbuka" has as its goal to increase the capacity of universities from 5% to 8.2%. Its programs are open to any high school graduate, including those who work, without limitation in age or status. Those interested in joining may register at post offices or at universities. Several state universities and teachers colleges are bing prepared to administer examinations for Open University students.

The long-distance learning system ("sistim belajar jarak jauh" SBJJ) consists of three programs, namely the regular university curriculum, the two-year diploma curriculum and special programs, such teacher training projects, leading to the award of a certificate. In 1984, the university program began with courses in state administration, business administration, development and economics, and applied statistics. The American semester credit system is being followed.

Another project, one in operation for more than five years, is a training program for primary school teachers using radio. The project broadcasts radio in-service training, supported with simple print materials, to about 70,000 teachers in 11 provinces.

In addition, in cooperation with the Adult and Community Education Division of the Ministry of Education, the PTKPK provides radio support for rural learning groups in 20 experimental sites. Programming is decentralized and broadcast primarily through provincial and local stations in the national radio network (RRI).

Seventeen half-hour childrens' programs, with assistance from UNICEF, have been produced on the theme of character development, for example. Designed for open broadcast, these programs use drama to bring the theme of character development to rural and semi-rural children. Topics include problem-solving, initiative, acceptance of responsibility, and self-image.

A series on environmental problems and issues in development has also been broadcast from the TV Republic Indonesia (TVRI) station in East Java. The same Surabaya TV station also hosts a weekly live "development quiz" program.

A USAID-supported Rural Satellite Project, using 14 earth stations scattered among the eastern islands of Indonesia was begun in February of this year. It is a distance teaching project, consisting of audioteleconferencing, audiographics and facsimile techniques, designed to make faculty expertise and library resources more widely available. Emphasis is on improving the delivery of agricultural education by means of master tutors.

Ambassador A. Hasnan Habib, in a speech on Education and Development in Indonesia at Ohio University in May of this year, emphasized "The development of a nation will only be successful if she succeeds in developing its human resources. It is not the abundance of natural resources that a nation posseses, that guarantees success, happiness and prosperity, it is the quality of its human resources that counts. . . And we are fully aware that Education holds the key."

On that occasion, he pointed out that "educational expansion, itself one of the objects of National Development, has facilitated Indonesia's economic growth over the last 15 years. It has made important contributions to the process of nation building. . . Through development we wish to rectify and/or eliminate the many structural deficiencies and disparities which were and still are the main causes of the low standard of living, particularly socio-economic and intellectual. . . Essentially we aim at the total development of the Indonesian Man and the Indonesian Society, based on our outlook of the world, or national philosophy, Pancasila."

In terms of national objectives, it is clear that the expectations of education in Indonesia are also the expectations of telecommunications, that they each are valuable national resources and each will take their place in the process of nation building.

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